

McWilliam Scale of Early Intervention Goal

Functionality

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- 5 Necessary and able to be integrated into routines, with a logical criterion
- 4 Fun (but not necessary) and able to be integrated into routines, with a logical criterion
- 3 Necessary or fun but with an illogical or vague criterion or routine
- 2 Developmental or "foundational" but unlikely to be necessary or too specific to have general utility
- 1 Reflects only participation in treatment

With each goal or strategy, can you imagine the parent or teacher saying, "I wish he'd _____ (whatever the goal or strategy says)"? If no, score low.

Still to be decided: Are "routinely" and "consistently" logical criteria?

5 Necessary and able to be integrated into routines, with a logical criterion

Example: Chuck will finger feed himself and hold his own cup without need for redirection (to address dropping, throwing behaviors) more than twice in any meal, at home or child care setting

Comment: The desired behaviors are clear, although having two could be a problem. The intent appears to be for Chuck to be engaged during meals, rather than dropping and throwing things. I can see that this would be necessary for him to participate in routines appropriately and I can imagine his family saying, "I wish he wouldn't throw things at meals." The criterion is not great, because Chuck could ostensibly put food into his mouth three times, drop his cup, and throw the rest of his food and still have met the criterion. Nevertheless, it is measurable and observable. Better criteria would have been (a) "without redirection for five minutes without throwing" or (b) "without redirection and with no more than two dropping or throwing incidents in a half-hour meal."

Example: Given minimal adult support, Susie will actively participate in art/creative activities for at least 5 min. at a time, in daily play routines in classroom and at home.

Comment: This is an engagement goal, and engagement goals are almost always functional. For Susie to get anything out of art and creative activities in the classroom she would need to participate. The goal starts with the familiar "Given [a teaching condition]," which is required in some systems. I can imagine the teacher saying, "I wish she'd do something during art time." The criterion of 5 minutes is logical for an engagement goal, although I can only assume it's appropriate for Susie. The settings at the end are a little suspect, in that play routines in the classroom and at home might not have art or creative materials. I'll give the goal writer the benefit of the doubt and assume that they are or can be.

Example: Given supportive seating and assistive technology as needed, Ellie will put her first name on paper accurately, with moderate assist from adult, 75% of the time.

Comment: This preschool skill is clear and necessary in certain situations; we assume it's developmentally and individually appropriate. I can imagine the parent saying, "I'd like her to be able to write her name before she goes to kindergarten," even though, developmentally, that might be unnecessary. Seventy-five percent of the time is a logical criterion, but we should be wary of using percentages too much. They are overused by people who have no intention of keeping track of the frequency of the behavior relative to the frequency of opportunities.

Example: Lola will use body movements and sounds to keep a favorite game going with toys and familiar adults (5 xs in each of 3 daily routines).

Comment: This engagement goal is for an infant. The goal is general but clear and is necessary for a child to have sustained interactions. I can imagine a teacher wanting to see a child do this. The criterion is good, especially because it is double barreled; two criteria (acquisition and generalization, in this case) are better than one.

4 Fun (but not necessary) and able to be integrated into routines, with a logical criterion

Example: Chuck will imitate sounds and simple words when presented with gesture, action play, songs and toy play (animals) 3 times in each of 5 daily routines at home and at school.

Comment: How necessary it is for Chuck to imitate is not convincing, even though we know that imitation is an important developmental skill. Nevertheless, action play, songs, and toy play sound like fun and could therefore have some functional value for Chuck. Although Chuck's parents might or might not have said they want him to imitate, it's unlikely that carrying out these strategies would impinge on their lives unduly. The criterion seems logical, although it's somewhat unclear what "daily routines" means. I suspect it means "in each of 5 routines in 1 day". "daily routines" could mean routines that tend to happen every day.

Example: Susie will engage in familiar pretend play scenarios consisting of at least 3 sequences for at least 5 min. with peer(s) with adult support 2 xs daily.

Comment: Engaging in pretend play might not be necessary but is likely to be fun for a child—and something that can be integrated into regular routines. It's possible caregivers said they wanted Susie to participate in pretend-play scenarios. This goal has an astonishing four criteria: a generalization one (3 sequences), a duration one (at least 5 minutes), a prompt-level one (adult support), and a frequency one (twice daily).

Example: Ellie will actively steer a tricycle to maneuver around the bike path with only occasional adult assistance.

Comment: It is unclear how necessary it is for a child to be able to steer a tricycle but it potentially fun. I can imagine a teacher saying, "I wish Ellie could ride the tricycle outside so she could have more fun on the playground." The criteria are logical and consist of one acquisition criterion and one prompt-level criterion.

Considering these criteria, we assume Ellie currently cannot get around the bike path without considerable assistance.

Example: Cam will expand playground/outdoor play skills by engaging in at least 3 different activities, for at least 5 min. at a time, without adult support, during outdoor play routines at home, school and community settings.

Comment: The purpose for the goal (expanding playground skills) comes first, which should not be confused for the actual goal (engaging in activities). This is important because "expanding," "increasing," and "improving" are examples of nonbehavioral statements that don't tell you what the child is to do. Here, however, the target behavior is fairly clear, but having three of them is potentially unnecessary but potentially fun. The other multiple criteria are logical.

3 Necessary or fun but with an illogical or vague criterion or routine

Example: Jonathan will increase active participation in mealtime by eating a variety of foods.

Comment: Whether the goal is engagement (i.e., active participation) or eating a variety of foods, we don't know when this would be achieved, because there is no criterion.

Example: Susie will use "not," "don't," and "no" in short phrases and sentences 3 xs in each of 5 daily routines at home and school.

Comment: Using negatives can be necessary but I question the frequency of the criterion. Expecting Susie to do this three times in a routine seems excessive.

Example: Ellie will routinely stand up from sitting on a chair or bench, using her hands to pull up to tables and other play areas in the classroom.

Comment: For this child with significant physical disabilities, this seems like a necessary target behavior, but we wouldn't know when she had acquired the skill.

"Routinely" is too vague.

Example: Cam will follow and actively participate in selected classroom routines/activities with moderate adult support daily.

Comment: Although this engagement goal appears to have two criteria (moderate support, daily), it's unclear whether this means that if he were engaged in one activity on each of two days (assuming "daily" requires more than 1 day) the goal would be accomplished. With the lack of a specified type of engagement or routine, this goal suffers from vagueness all around.

2 Developmental or "foundational" but unlikely to be necessary or too specific to have general utility

Example: Cam will do the same thing as a peer or an adult when given verbal direction and physical prompts by an adult 3 xs in each of 5 daily routines at home and school.

Comment: The necessity of this imitation goal is unclear and could have come from a developmental checklist specifying that imitation would be next in a child's cognitive or communication domain. I'm not convinced Cam's parents would have said they want him to imitate for the sake of imitating. No routine in which lack of imitation would be a problem is specified. Unlike the imitation goal

for Chuck above, under 4, this one doesn't specify routines or activities that would make it fun or necessary.

Example: Perdita will maintain an upright trunk position for a minimum of 10 minutes when engaged in a classroom activity.

Comment: Why? The purpose of this goal might be for Perdita's overall health; she needs to sit upright so can breathe possibly and develop stronger muscles throughout her trunk. If this had been stated, it would have been more functional. As it is, we don't know that slumping (or whatever the problem behavior was) was indeed a problem in any specific routines.

Example: Lola will use her right hand to grasp and manipulate toys consistently, as is appropriate.

Comment: It might never be appropriate! Lola has fused fingers and other anomalies in her right hand. Consequently, she doesn't use it much and can be expected to continue using her left hand more, as she gets older. Professionals want her to use it, even though it is inefficient for her. Although some use of Lola's right hand might be necessary (e.g., to hold a bottle with two hands), why does she need to use her right hand to grasp and manipulate toys, when she can use her left one? Although it might be developmentally helpful for Lola to learn to use her right hand for some things, it's unlikely caregivers will find much motivation to work on the unnecessary behavior of picking up toys.

Example: Chuck will use 2 new consonant sounds in his independent and interactive sound play repertoire at least 10 xs in each in a variety of daily routines.

Comment: The clue that this might not be a functional goal is the use of jargon. One problem with this goal is that it's unclear whether two new sounds will be identified and these two will be taught in the daily routines or whether two new sounds will be taught in every routine, which is unlikely. I can't imagine Chuck's parents saying they would like him to use new consonant sounds. So why does this outcome exist? Could it be that, according to a developmental checklist, he now should be using new consonants? This goal would have been helped

considerably with a purpose statement ("[in order] to," "so Chuck can ____").

1 Reflects only participation in treatment

Example: Mike will stand supported by his supine stander and participate in classroom activity time or music for 30 minutes each day.

Comment: This goal could have been functional had it been reversed: *Mike will participate in classroom activity time or music while standing supported by his supine stander for 30 minutes each day.* By putting standing in the stander first, it appears to be a therapy participation goal with engagement tacked on as the justification. This goal would also have been helped with a purpose statement, although engagement could be it.

Example: Mike will consistently maintain an upright head and trunk position a minimum of 10 consecutive minutes when sitting astride a bolster, with occasional support at hip level.

Comment: This goal could have been helped with a purpose statement. It's unclear whether "consistently" means every single time. If so, how many times do you need to see it to be convinced that it's "consistent"?